

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a plain bearing, more particularly to the plain bearing for internal combustion engines.

5 There has been known a plain bearing comprising a back metal layer, a bearing alloy layer made of a copper alloy or an aluminum alloy, and an overlay which is provided on the bearing alloy layer in order to enhance conformability and foreign-matter embeddability of the
10 bearing.

 There has been also well known an overlay Pb-base alloy comprising Sn and In. For example, JP-A-4-2739 teaches a tin-base alloy comprising 0.1 to 25 wt% In. According to the publication, the tin-base alloy has excellent corrosion
15 resistance derived from Sn and can solve the problems of tin which lacks conformability and affinity for oil and which has a high coefficient of friction.

 Recently, however, a lead-free plain bearing is sought as a countermeasure against the environmental
20 problems, so that an alternative overlay made of a lead-free alloy is sought. On the other hand, regarding internal combustion engines, there is a recent trend that they are provided with a high performance of high speed and high load, so that a plain bearing especially having excellent
25 properties of anti-seizure and fatigue resistance is highly

sought.

It has been generally known that the tin-base alloy overlay has excellent corrosion resistance in comparison with the lead-base alloy overlay but the former
5 is inferior in anti-seizure and fatigue resistance properties than the latter. It is also noted that the Sn-In alloy disclosed in JP-A-4-2739 has a considerably low melting point because of the additive alloying element of In (indium), so that the Sn-In alloy will not be so suitable
10 for plain bearings of internal combustion engines, which are used under a high temperature of around 130°C to 150°C, because of rather unsatisfactory anti-seizure and fatigue resistance properties.

15 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Thus, it is an object of the invention to provide an overlay for plain bearings, which has excellent high temperature properties of anti-seizure and fatigue resistance.

20 According to the present invention, there is provided a plain bearing comprising a back metal layer, a bearing alloy layer and an overlay which coats the bearing alloy layer, wherein the overlay is made of a lead-free tin-base alloy which comprises, by weight, from more than 2% to
25 10% Ag. The plain bearing has excellent anti-seizure and fatigue resistance properties. The bearing alloy layer may be of known bearing alloys including copper alloys and aluminum alloys. The plain bearing can be lead-free in the

case where the bearing alloy layer is made of a lead-free alloy.

Regarding the chemical composition of the overlay alloy, if the Ag amount is not more than 2 wt%, the above
5 advantageous effects of excellent anti-seizure and fatigue resistance properties can not be obtained. The overlay alloy is the most excellent at an amount of about 3 wt% Ag with respect to anti-seizure and fatigue resistance properties. If the Ag amount is increased over the level of
10 about 3 wt%, the both properties are gradually deteriorated corresponding to the increased level and extremely deteriorated at an Ag amount of more than 10 wt%. Therefore the Ag amount is desirably 2.5 wt% to 5 wt%.

The overlay may be formed on the bearing alloy
15 layer directly or through an inter layer made of Ni or Ag in order to avoid occurrence of the mutual diffusion or bonding problem between the bearing alloy layer and the overlay.

The overlay may optionally comprise other alloying elements than Ag in order to further improve mechanical
20 properties thereof, especially fatigue resistance. Such alloying elements may be preferably Cu, Sb, Zn, Ni and so on because the melting point of the overlay is not lowered thereby.

The overlay may also optionally comprise hard
25 particles such as nitrides, carbides or oxides in order to improve wear resistance property, or solid lubricants such as MoS₂, BN, graphite, PTFE and so on in order to decrease the coefficient of friction.

The invention plain bearing is excellent in high temperature properties of anti-seizure and fatigue resistance, and especially suitable for internal combustion engines.

5 Herein below a detailed description will be provided with regard to invention and comparative examples.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a graph showing a relationship between
10 an Ag amount in the overlay and a maximum surface pressure without occurrence of seizure; and

Fig. 2 is a graph showing a relationship between an Ag amount in the overlay and a maximum surface pressure without occurrence of fatigue.

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EXAMPLE

Preparing example specimens

1. Steel plates (SPES), each coated with a copper plating film having a thickness of $8\mu\text{m}$ were prepared.
- 20 2. A bearing alloy powder, which has a chemical composition of 6 wt% Sn and the balance of Cu, was spread on the respective steel plates.
3. The steel plates each having a powder layer were sintered in a reducing atmosphere furnace at 700°C to 900°C
25 of temperature for 10 to 30 minutes.
4. Subsequently, the sintered plates were rolled by a rolling mill.
5. Process steps 3 and 4 were repeated once again to

obtain bimetal plates each of which has a thickness of 1.5mm and each of which comprises a bearing alloy layer having a thickness of 0.35mm.

6. The respective bimetal plates were sheared and
5 machined to obtain half shell bearing specimens each having an outer diameter of 56mm and a width of 16mm.

7. The specimens were subjected to a preliminary treatment of degreasing by an aqueous solvent, electrolysis degreasing and pickling in this order.

10 8. The respective pre-treated specimens was plated with Ag-plating having a thickness of 5 μ m.

9. Finally, the Ag-plated specimens were further plated with an overlay having a thickness of 5 μ m, respectively, so that a plural specimens of invention
15 examples 1 to 7 and comparative examples 1 to 6 of which overlay compositions are shown in Table 1 were obtained.

Test

With regard to the invention and comparative
20 examples of half shell bearings, a seizure test was carried out with utilization of a heated lubricant oil of VG22 at 100°C of temperature and a mating shaft which was made of JIS S55 and had a surface roughness of 0.8 μ m (Rmax).

In the test, the mating shaft was supported by
25 example half shell bearings and rotated at a rate of 7200 rpm, wherein at first a running-in operation was conducted without load for one hour, thereafter the lubricant oil was supplied to the bearings and the mating shaft by a flow rate

of 150 cc/min. and an initial bearing load of 10MPa was provided to the mating shaft and the bearings. The bearing load was increased step-by-step in a manner that 10MPa was accumulated every 10 minutes. While continuously rotating the mating shaft and increasing the bearing load step-by-step, when the temperature of the bearing back surface exceeded 200°C or there occurred a slip of a driving belt due to a torque change, it was decided that there arose "seizure" at the sliding-contact portion. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

		OVERLAY (chemical composition) (wt%)	MAX SURFACE PRESSURE WITHOUT OCCURRENCE OF SEIZURE (MPa)	MAX SURFACE PRESSURE WITHOUT OCCURRENCE OF FATIGUE (MPa)
INVEN- TION EXAM- PLE	1	2.8Ag-Sn	80	130
	2	3.5Ag-Sn	80	130
	3	4.2Ag-Sn	80	130
	4	5.0Ag-Sn	80	130
	5	10Ag-Sn	75	120
	6	5.0Ag-1.0Cu-Sn	80	135
	7	3.5Ag-2.0Sb-Sn	80	135
COM- PARA- TIVE EXAM- PLE	1	pure Sn	50	100
	2	1.8Ag-Sn	65	120
	3	11Ag-Sn	70	110
	4	13Ag-Sn	60	80
	5	2Cu-Sn	60	120
	6	9Sn-9In-Pb	85	-

Referring to Fig. 1 which shows a relationship between an Ag amount in the overlay and a maximum surface pressure without occurrence of seizure, when the Ag amount is increased from zero to about 3 wt%, the maximum surface pressure rises from 50MPa to 80MPa. The maximum surface pressure is maintained highly from an amount range of from about 3 wt% to 5 wt%. When the Ag amount is increased from 5 wt% to 10 wt%, the maximum surface pressure is gradually reduced. When the Ag amount exceeds 10 wt%, the maximum surface pressure is significantly decreased. From the test results, it will be understood that the invention examples have substantially the same anti-seizure property as that of the conventional alloy of 9Sn-9In-Pb.

Regarding the same examples, a fatigue test was also carried out with utilization of a heated lubricant oil of VG22 at 100°C of temperature.

In the fatigue test, the mating shaft was rotated at a rate of 7200 rpm, and wherein at first a running-in operation was conducted without load for one hour, thereafter the lubricant oil was supplied to the bearings and the mating shaft by a flow rate of 150 cc/min. and a predetermined bearing load was provided to the mating shaft and the bearings.

After a continuous rotation of the mating shaft for 20 hours, the inner surface of the respective specimen bearing was observed by eye. When no fatigue was observed on an example specimen, it was further subjected to the fatigue test under an increased bearing load. Fatigue

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resistance property was determined in terms of a maximum surface pressure without occurrence of fatigue. The test results are shown in Table 1.

Referring to Fig. 2 which shows a relationship
5 between an Ag amount in the overlay and a maximum surface pressure without occurrence of fatigue, when the Ag amount is increased from zero to about 3 wt%, the maximum surface pressure rises from 100MPa to 130MPa. The maximum surface pressure is maintained highly from an amount range of from
10 about 3 wt% to 5 wt%. When the Ag amount is increased from 5 wt% to 10 wt%, the maximum surface pressure is gradually reduced. When the Ag amount exceeds 10 wt%, the maximum surface pressure is significantly decreased. It is noted that the graph of Fig. 2 is similar to that of Fig. 1.